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HISTORICAL SKETCHES
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—DURING THE—

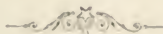
REVOLUTIONARY WAR,

—BY—

BARNABAS HOWES,

ASHFIELD,

*Who will send upon the receipt of Twenty-
Five Cents, a copy postpaid
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MRS. W. B. WALDEN, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER,
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HISTORICAL SKETCHES
OF THE TIMES AND MEN
IN ASHFIELD, MASS.,
DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

The year 1777 was a peculiarly dark and trying one, to that part of the inhabitants of Ashfield who were patriotic. Many of them had been here only a year, while all the settlements in town were quite recent. Prominent men did not disguise their sympathy with the royal government, and the year before three men had fallen in the battle of Long Island, never to return to their friends. The armies of Howe and Burgoyne were driving the Americans before them at almost every point. It is therefore an highly interesting inquiry, what did our fathers do? The historical account that has come down to us gives answer. They put forth vigorous efforts, and offered earnest prayer to the God of Heaven for Providential aid.

Of the efforts, I have often heard, how when a messenger came on the 16th of August to call for soldiers, he found men

at the old meeting-house with their muskets, ready to go promptly on to the army. And upon examining a list of the patriotic I am impressed with the thought, that so large a proportion of them did so. Seven out of twelve of those who were of suitable age. Two men it appears were enduring hard service under Washington. Mr. Stocking had nine men to guard in his house because of their Tory sympathy. So we see the efforts of the newly and thinly settled districts were to the extent of their ability; though our estimate does not comprise the most thickly settled districts as No 1, 2, and 8. For at this late day, I am unable to learn where all their men were. Then our fathers were wise enough to do more than put forth determined efforts. They earnestly sought for assistance from "the great Judge of the Universe." Not only soldiers went on; their minister went as a chaplain. The Rev. Nehemiah Porter left Ashfield soon after the 16th of August and did not return until after the surrender of Burgoyne. His serving as chaplain in Gen. Gates' army is the great historical event of Ashfield, though Dr. Paine does not allude to it in his history of the town. Yet it may be safely claimed, that it would be profitable to every friend of our country to know about his services to it, in the time of its trial. But though I have for nearly twenty years been endeavoring to find something published or written about them, I have found only a few sentences. I am obliged, therefore, to rely upon traditional reports. They inform us that at one time the army was assembled for prayer, and Mr. Porter engaged so long and earnestly in prayer, a profane soldier said, "I don't want to live until that man gets done praying." From what Dr. Thatcher, a surgeon in the army, has recorded in his journal, we infer, this assembling of the soldiers was on the Sabbath, just before Gen. Gates marched north to meet Burgoyne. And the next day he wrote and issued his proclamation, encouraging the Americans to expect the help of Heaven. It seems evident Gates was inspired with this encouraging assurance to his men, by hearing Mr. Porter's prayer.

And if there is a Heaven to help the oppressed, in their efforts to resist kings and aristocrats, Mr. Porter's prayers were of great service to secure the independence of our free

nation. Quite too many at the present day reason as if there was no such Heaven. They are unwilling to admit that there is an unseen Mind exercising omnipotent power to control all events, as the prayers of good people desire. But have we not evidence that Gen. Gates reasoned correctly, when he told them that Heaven would help them? For was not efficient aid given? It is said that the battles of Saratoga and Stillwater decided that the friends of liberty should succeed in establishing a free government, or meet with irretrievable defeat, and that irretrievable defeat would have overtaken our army, had not an unexpected event kept its general and officers from going on with their unskillfully formed plans. A large body of our men were kept from a bad movement, by a British deserter, who informed them where Burgoyne's soldiers lay concealed, and so saved them from imminent danger.

This shows how easily an unseen Mind may make a very slight cause the means of producing vast results. We can understand that it was not difficult to induce the deserter to go over to the Americans and communicate information of great importance. Upon communicating that information depended the victory at Saratoga, and that victory secured in the end the freedom and independence of the nation. We see, therefore, that events are determined not by the evolution of matter moving round and round again by a course of unvarying laws; but by knowledge as it is possessed and used by mind. We can easily understand how the mind of a shrewd man, may furnish a general with such knowledge, as will enable him to gain an important victory. May we not suppose a Mind infinitely more learned and skillful may do as much and vastly more. Now this is what we believe is Providentially done in answer to prayer. The infinite knowledge of God is continually directing events. The great Divine Mind is ever turning the minds of men, and events contingent upon the will of men are so changed or modified, as to make them accomplish His designs. If then He has designs of granting, what is desired in prayer, no one is able to resist His purposes. Our fathers in this town had a firm belief that He has such designs. So strong was their confidence Mr. Porter and several pious soldiers, turned aside into a retired place and spent a season in earnest prayer, while the battle was raging at Saratoga. And

the fact that the most decisive victory of the Revolutionary war was gained after seasons of special prayer, is a strong argument for the existence of an intelligent Being, who has great power to help the true friends of freedom, if they call upon Him.

Then the Bible teaches that "if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us." We claim we have an illustration of this, when we consider that our fathers were not slave-holders. They did not insult the God of Heaven with prayers, while they neglected to give liberty to the Negro. I have what I deem reliable information, that the Rev. Jacob Sherwin, the Congregational minister in our town, owned a slave; and for his treatment of her, he was dismissed from the ministerial office. And so great was the aversion of our fathers to the practice of holding slaves, and so deeply were they impressed with the truth, "that all men were created free and equal," they deemed him unworthy of a standing in the pulpit. Our space will not permit me to give a detailed account of this early, if not the first, effort in America to redeem the Christian church from the practice of holding slaves. It is sufficient to our present purpose to say that the prayers Mr. Porter and Deacon Taylor rose to Heaven unhindered by any complicity with the practice of depriving men of their freedom.

We have therefore another and a conclusive argument in this, that there is a Mind exercising omnipotent power, to help those deprived of freedom in their struggles against their oppressors. For if we have in writing certain specified conditions, in which prayer will or will not be heard, and those conditions are manifestly adhered to, evidence is furnished, which ought to convince every reasonable man, that there is a "Supreme Judge of the Universe." To such it will be interesting and profitable to notice how many of the victories of the Revolutionary war were gained in the non-slave-holding parts of the country; and how many of its defeats were experienced in the slave-holding parts. The men who rallied at Lexington and drove the British back to Boston were not slave-holders. Neither were the men who stood on Bunker Hill and shot down the British infantry. The defenders of Fort Stanwix, and the Green Mountain boys and the Sons of

New Hampshire, who won so promptly the desirable victory at Bennington, were not slave-holders; neither were the men who stood firm at Saratoga, and met the thrice repeated charges of Burgoyne's selected soldiers, though their commander was. Gen. Washington, a slave-holder, was the first in command, when it suffered the severe and disastrous defeat on Long Island. Gen. Gates, a slave-holder, commanded at Camden, when he and soldiers from slave-holding states were panic smitten, and almost every defeat and reverse, was in slave-holding states; and so furnishes an illustration that the sin of holding slaves hindered the prayers of those who interceded for their own freedom and independence, while they neglected to give liberty to the African race.

We have, therefore sound reasons for claiming Mr. Porter rendered important services as chaplain, by his prayers and counsels to his country and the cause of freedom throughout the whole world. All the authors of our American histories, in their zeal to give Washington the honor of achieving our independence, fail to present a full and correct view of the very great importance of the victories at Fort Stanwix, Bennington and Saratoga. But if we turn to what English historians have written, we find a more just estimate of it. Hume says: "Uncertain rumors being spread at London, in the course of the morning, as soon as Parliament met, the Secretary was questioned respecting the intelligence. Rising slowly in his seat, in a low voice and sorrowful accents, he acknowledged that Gen. Burgoyne and his army were prisoners of war. For a considerable time after the fatal tidings were delivered, a dead silence overspread the house; shame, consternation and dismay from the declared issue of their boasted armament, did not more closely enchain the tongues of the promoters of the war, than astonishment and grief overwhelmed the feelings and utterances of their opponents. The stillness, however, of amazement and grief, at length gave way to the loudness of lament and fury of indignation; all the charges and censures, that ever had been or could be adduced were repeated and accumulated against the authors of the war." From this extract we see that the able British statesmen considered their defeats which had resulted in the surrender of Burgoyne, as severe ones, and likely to have a highly disastrous effect upon

their cause, and though the pride of George the Third and his ministers, encouraged by the self-conceited and rash management of Gates at Camden, kept him from acknowledging our independence for several years : still the question was decided. I have said Mr. Porter's serving as chaplain in the army, was the great historical event in Ashfield ; I may with truth, I believe, say that his services in the army were in a pre-eminent degree, a great historical event in the history of the world. For far-reaching effects have for the past one hundred years, resulted from them. Our history books state that Col. Baum was "despatched to seize a magazine of stores at Bennington." Dr. Thatcher, a surgeon in the army, in his journal says Baum was ordered to "march to the Connecticut river and return by the other road," to capture a large number of horses and "to endeavor to produce the impression it was his design to form a junction with the British forces in Rhode Island." If we consider what is the reason for this difference between him and the others, we should understand that almost all the authors of our histories are unwilling to displease slaveholders ; or else have written under the influence of political party zeal. They try to make it appear that Burgoyne's only object in sending out Baum was to capture the military stores ; and so his generalship appears to many not to have been of a very high order ; and therefore his defeat by Northern men had less to do in bringing the war to a successful close. But if he sent him with orders to "march to the Connecticut river and back again by the other road ;" his ability as a general may be estimated as of much higher order. For it was quite a shrewd plan to send abroad this detachment, to strengthen the Tory spirit, already very strong, as we, who have lived all our days among the hills of western Massachusetts, have often been informed ; for by so doing Gates' army could not be re-enforced by crowds of militia men. The impression therefore, which some, if not all the readers of history books, that were published previous to President Lincoln's proclamation of emancipation have, that Burgoyne was an incompetent general, is a mistaken one. He was undoubtedly an able officer, and it was only a hair-breath escape, that the friends of liberty had, from having their cause strangled to death by him. And it was not the ability of generals, that

stopped his doing it; but the rallying of hardy men from log houses and houses little better, with Providential aid, who captured him and his army, and established peace and safety and free institutions, among our hills and vallies.

Two thousand seven hundred years before the leading men in the freest nation that ever peopled the earth, said to their Judge: "Make us a king that he may go out before us, and fight our battles." From that remote age until the victory over King George the Third the opinion prevailed among the nations that a monarchical form of government made a nation more efficient in war than a republican one, but in 1777, the experiment was tried, and a republican government proved to make a nation the most powerful in war. And this experiment is of inestimable importance to the inhabitants of the whole world. For the only argument for a monarchical government was shown to be the mistaken opinion of men adapted without careful experiments. Hence the efforts and prayers of our father have been a cause producing far-reaching effects.

There is hardly a king now in the whole world, that does not tremble on his throne, as the result of what the friends of freedom did to Burgoyne and his army. It was a terrible experiment to them—a bursting forth of a mighty moral principle, that like a great earthquake that begins to rock a few hills, but year after year moves on with increasing volume of sound and ominous shaking of mountains, rocks, oceans, forests and dwellings.

The moral and intellectual greatness of a man does not depend on his being a ruler of a kingdom or an empire, or his being the commander of a large and successful army, but on the courage with which he endures trials and meets difficulties and dangers. Mr. Porter, in the darkest hours of our country, when men's hearts were failing them for fear, and when five Congregational clergymen in what is now Franklin county were Tories, went on to serve as chaplain in Gates' army. And so far as we can learn no other clergymen of any denomination in the whole country offered to serve in that capacity in his army.

Of the other years, and of the other men who served in the Revolutionary war from our town, my space will require me to be brief, and only to relate the most interesting incidents.

Their names were :

MOSES SMITH, SR.,	Killed.
MOSES SMITH, JR.,	"
CORNELIUS WARREN,	"
TIMOTHY PERKINS, JR.	"
JONATHAN TAYLOR, JR.	
ZACHARIAH HOWES,	
ELISHA PARKER,	
JOHN WARD,	
SAMUEL GUILFORD,	
JOSEPH BISHOP,	
SAMUEL BURTON,	
JONATHAN LYON,	Lost an arm.
ELDER ENOS SMITH,	
JONATHAN LILLY,	
SPENCER PHILLIPS,	
SYLVESTER PHILLIPS,	
TIMOTHY WARREN,	
BETHUEL LILLY,	
CALEB WARD,	
EDWARD ANABLE,	
JOHN BELDING,	
JOHN ALDEN,	Died.
JOEL CRANSTON,	"
EBENEZER CRANSTON,	"
JOSIAH FULLER,	
HENRY ROGERS,	Died.
CAPT. ASA CRANSTON,	
DEACON JOHN BEMENT,	
PHINEAS BEMENT,	
ROBERT GRAY,	

Twelve young men, who served in the Revolutionary war, settled in Ashfield before it closed or soon after. Their names are :

LOT BASSETT,
STEPHEN WARREN,
SOLOMON HILL,
CALEB CHURCH,
JOSEPH GURNEY,
LABAN STETSON,
CALEB PACKARD,
EZEKIEL TAYLOR,

DAVID VINCENT,
JONATHAN SEARS,
CALVIN MAYNARD,
TIMOTHY CATLIN,
ZEBINA LEONARD,
BENJIMAN SHAW.

We find in the history of North Ashfield, that this "Moses Smith was of Ashfield, 1753, and the son of Samuel, who was the son of Preserved, who was the son of Henry, who came to America in 1635, and was cousin to Chileab, and who married when 96 a fourth wife; children of the fifth generation attending his wedding." It is also stated that he had two sons, Moses and Aaron. From finding among the list of voters in 1774 two Moses Smith's, I have evidence that his son Moses was the one killed in battle and that Aaron died when young. As no further account is given of his descendants, which coincides with the tradition that none of his male descendants survived the battle of Long Island. An additional statement inform us he was Ensign from Hinsdale in 1761-4. So we may infer our town sent a veteran to the army early in the war.

We have often read how Washington, in the heat of the battle of Long Island, crossed over from New York to Brooklyn, and seeing his best soldiers slaughtered, uttered an exclamation of anguish. No doubt there were many exclamations of anguish, when the news came to Ashfield, that three of their best soldiers had fallen in battle. Moses Smith left a little daughter of two years, the only surviving member of the family; how great must have been her sorrow, that her father and only brother were killed so soon after the death of her mother. She was carried by friends to one of the river towns, and lived to the age of seventy-four, when the mother of the writer saw her, and she told her the sad story.

Quite as sad was the story of the death of Cornelius Warren, who was shot in the same battle. A most feeling account of the deep sorrow of his mother, was told to me by one who was her next door neighbor. How her husband was intemperate and treated her cruelly, while Cornelius was kind and industrious but her other and younger sons were not. Had as many in proportion to the population been killed in the thirteen states, I find by computation 1751 would have been slain.

Jonathan Lilly, born in Stafford, Conn., in 1740, came to Ash.

field in 1762, and had served in the French war four years and was a veteran in the Revolutionary war.

Joel and Ebenezer Cranston went into the army under Washington about 1779. Both of these young men died suddenly of dysentery. The fatal disease was caused by eating beef badly cooked.

Henry Rogers, the father of Sarah, the wife of Seth Church, was drafted. At first he felt reluctant to join the army, but after the first campaign he more willingly engaged in the service of his country, until death ended his earthly trials and hardships.

Of John Alden, who died, and Jonathan Lyon, who lost an arm, we are not able to learn much about.

John Ward, it appears from the statement of his daughter, Mrs. Israel Phillips, now living at Ashfield, was in service three years or more; and his son, John C., informed us was at Saratoga, and stood only about five feet from Burgoyne, when he gave up his sword to Gen. Gates. He never had a pension.

Timothy Perkins, Jr., the father of Jehiel, and Timothy Warren were in the army three years or more, but Perkins had too much property to draw a pension under the law as first enacted.

Bethuel Lilly was in the army 1780, and was guard of Andre on the night before his execution, and as he was taken to the gallows. One of his sons, Joel, had three out of his four sons in the war to maintain our Union; Joel, Jr., Casper, who died suddenly in the camp, and Rufus.

The descendants of Joseph Gurney, Solomon Hill, Laban Stetson, Ezekiel Taylor and Caleb Packard are living in Spruce Corner district or its vicinity. Three of Packard's grand-sons live now in Plainfield. Several anecdotes may be related of Ezekiel Taylor that are worth preserving. He stopped over night at the house of my father, and in the morning said he was on his way to the next town to pay a debt to the widow of Dr. A. He told how several years before he had failed in business, but now having got a pension he was determined to pay his debts. A different spirit at the present time actuates many men, and they refuse to pay their debts after they fail. We have often heard he told with great glee, how when the tidings came of the gathering under Daniel Shays, he took his musket and started upon a run, until in some way he discovered his musket had no lock on it, and was worthless.

Stephen Warren lived to the age of ninety. Some of his descendants are living in Illinois.

David Vincent—though his father was reluctant to have him do it—enlisted near the close of the war. He was a pensioner; so was his son David, Jr., for serving in the war of 1812.

We are informed that all of the Church name in Ashfield are the descendants of Caleb Church.

Joseph Blake served in the Revolutionary war, though he lived and died in what is now the town of Goshen. His grand-son, Hosea Blake, in 1876, had in his possession the old French gun he used in the war, and he said he very highly prized it, and it is now kept by Silas Blake, Esq.

More interesting than almost any of the historical items that have been related to us, was how Elizabeth Stocking spun the yarn and wove a piece of cloth for the soldiers. There must have been much real hard work in converting enough tow into cloth to make a piece of some thirty or forty yards. She married Timothy Perkins, Jr., November 25th, 1779, after his return from the war.

A veteran soldier, Nathan Crosby, stayed over night at the house of my father in 1823. He stood in a hard place in the hard fought battle of Monmouth, and the hot sun of that day struck upon his brain, and his mind became disordered. He journeyed from Dennis on Cape Cod to Ashfield and back again almost every year, carrying on his back a large pack. He walked to Washington to see the President—I think it was Munroe—and plead with him to recommend to Congress to enact a pension law, and though we do not know how much influence his speech had with the President, yet to see the once vigorous young man stand up and tell what he suffered in that severe battle on that intensely hot day, and to notice his packs which contained all of his property, must, it is reasonable to suppose, have lead the President to reflect upon the circumstance of one, who had endured so much for forty long years and never had much financial aid from his country. But the poor man died before any pension law helped him.

AARON LYON.

“At a town meeting held June 10, 1777, it was voted that Aaron Lyon is a suitable person to procure evidence against certain persons, who were thought to be enemies of the American States.” It is interesting to learn who this man was and in what part of the town he lived, and what made him a suitable person for such a work.

The writers of "The Memoirs of Mary Lyon" were evidently unacquainted with this event in the life of her grand-father, that unquestionably had much to do in determining what her character should be. Let us therefore recall a view of his situation in the summer of 1777. Burgoyne's orders to Col. Baum were to march as far as the Connecticut river and endeavor to produce the impression that he intended to form a junction with the British forces in Rhode Island, and return by the other road. If he had succeeded in advancing, his route would have been on to Fort Massachusetts at East Hoosac, now North Adams, and then over the mountain to near Fort Shirley, now Heath; then ford the river in what is now Buckland. He must next go up The Hollow to the settlement in the north-east part of Ashfield, near Aaron Lyon's house. But he was not a man to be afraid of his duty to his country, and August, 1777, Aaron Lyon, Peter Cross and Phineas Bartlett, Selectmen of Ashfield, brought into town meeting a report; that "Samuel Belding, Seth Wait, Philip Phillips, Samuel Anable, Jr., Wait Broughton, Asa Bacon, Elijah Wait, Jesse Edson and Daniel Bacon ought to be brought to a proper trial. The author of the History of the Connecticut Valley makes the statement that Aaron Lyon came to Buckland about 1780, but it is doubtful if he ever lived in Buckland. The present lines of the towns were not established until Mary Lyon was about ten years of age. And a list of voters of Ashfield, in 1798 has the name of Aaron Lyon. This was the grand-father of Mary, and I am told by Elijah Clark, of Plainfield, now ninety years of age, who lived some years in Ashfield in his youth, that both father and son lived together. I have been informed by Deacon Frederick Forbes, of Buckland, that there was a strife between the towns, which should have a gore lying between them. Squire Taylor, of Buckland, went to the General Court, and Squire Williams from Ashfield, for the purpose of getting the gore annexed to their town. During the absence of Squire Williams, Squire Taylor brought up the subject and no one being present to oppose him, got the town lines altered to his satisfaction and so the Lyon place was joined to Buckland. Instead of Aaron Lyon, Jr., coming to Buckland in 1780, he was born on his father's farm about 1757, in the town of Ashfield, and that farm has great notoriety as the birth-place of Mary Lyon. Thus we see that the writer of her memoirs were unacquainted with an important fact in her education, the mental and moral training given her family, when

the town of Ashfield voted "that Aaron Lyon, her grand-father, "is a suitable person" to procure evidence against the Tories in their town. Traits of character when introduced into a family are perpetuated to the third and fourth generation, or from generation to generation for thousands of years, and though Aaron Lyon might have had energy of mind before the town thus voted, we may well claim that vote greatly strengthened and developed it, and so inspired him with greatness, both mental and moral.

THE GRAVE OF MOSES RAWSON.

In the North-west school district, in the cemetery lying at the foot of Pumpkin Hill, is the grave of an old Revolutionary soldier. When a small boy I recollect visiting my aunt, the wife of his son, Oliver Rawson, and while there I heard them talking about his plans to get a pension for his then aged father. But the man who had done almost five years' hard service for his country had been to industrious and saving, and had too much property to have a pension in those years. Soon after his body was laid in the grave, though no monument marks the spot. Yet the traveler to our rural town may feel paid for going once to the place. When standing here let the dark hours of a night in 1779 be recalled, when soldiers were silently marching towards Stony Point. Had it been light we should not have noticed Moses Rawson, for his shiny clothes, or sash, or epaulets; for he only wore ragged pants and coat with a poor hat. Though had we been by his side, as he crossed the morass up to the walls of one of the strongest fortresses the British held, and saw the prompt firmness with which he advanced under a severe fire of musketry and cannon, we should have thought he was a Massachusetts soldier, and had we reflected upon the place this brave veteran had assigned to him in one of the advancing columns, we should wish to be able to visit him, and learn about the hard fought battles in which he had stood. But as such a wish cannot now be gratified, the writer recently visited his daughter, living at West Hawley, for the purpose of obtaining historical information. When asked if she remembered anything her father had told about what he did in the army, she said: "I often heard him tell about being in Fort Stanwix, when it was surrounded by the British for fourteen days, and how he fired so fast and so long, his gun became so hot he could not hold it." She thought

her father might have got a pension, had he taken an oath he was poor; before doing it giving his property to his son; but he would not take a false oath. Authors are fond of writing about generals and kings; but it would be more profitable to readers, if they had the history of men and women, who have moved in private circles. For the courage of such often decide the destiny of nations. Perhaps I should say they always do. Who will tell how much depended upon the courage of Moses Rawson at Fort Stanwix? Washington and the main army were hard pressed by Howe and his veteran soldiers; what could he do to oppose the army of the north? Indeed how was that army to be met and checked in its successful progress. The number of Tories in all our towns was rapidly increasing. The patriotic began to tremble and feel a weakness; but Moses Rawson stood firm, and fought and fired upon the soldiers selected to make a determined assault on Fort Stanwix; and after fourteen days of arduous labor under fire, had the satisfaction of knowing the enemy had retired. The Americans had been driven from Bunker Hill; from New York; from Ticonderoga, and from almost every other place where they had endeavored to make a stand; but now a persistent and vigorous assault upon them for more than two weeks and only left them standing firm. That this continued and unflinching firmness of private soldiers greatly discouraged Burgoyne and his men, while it encouraged and strengthened the citizen soldiers to flock in crowds to reinforce the army under Gates, we can easily understand. More than this it is reasonable to suppose the men who had given an example of firmness at Fort Stanwix, were promptly called to the front of Gates' army.

Burgoyne in his report to Parliament says: "I tried what virtue there was in the British bayonet, and sent three times eleven hundred men to charge the enemies' ranks." So it appears that he thought the unflinching firmness of the rank and file of the American army was the cause of his defeat. May we not then pause and reflect long, upon what a private individual can accomplish, if he stands in his place and acts with unyielding courage? It is reasonable to suppose Burgoyne fully understood the importance of Fort Stanwix, and the assault upon it was vigorous and persistent, and the

battle around and within its walls, bloody and terrible.

Mr. Headly writes of these eventful times: "The gallant defence of Fort Stanwix had frustrated Burgoyne's plans in that direction. From every valley and mountain slope the sturdy yeomanry went pouring in to Gates, their patriotism kindled into a brighter glow by the shouts of victory that came rolling in from Vermont and down the valley of the Mohawk; from Fort Stanwix and the bloody field of Oriskany. Finding himself cut off from the assistance of St. Leger by way of the Mohawk and a dark storm cloud gathering in his rear, and seeing an army rising before him, he surveyed with a stern and gloomy eye, the prospect that surrounded him. The second crisis in the American Revolution had come."

Now how easy is it to see that if an over-ruling Providence had not moved individuals to an unbending firmness to stand in the day of battle, when that crisis came, it would have been the dark hour of ruin to the cause of freedom. For Mr. Headly's assertion "from every valley and mountain slope the sturdy yeomanry went pouring in to Gates" is only the sentence of an imaginative writer, who pens a story that will please a certain class of readers, rather than state the facts of history. For if we take our glasses and look over the hills and vallies of western Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire, we shall notice only a few hill-sides and vallies that were settled as early as 1777. Therefore only a few farmers could go from them. It was not then great numbers but the courage of the few, that stopped the progress of the army of the north. And here in this hill-side grave-yard, was laid the remains of one of those brave few, who fought and fired at Fort Stanwix; who stood firm at Saratoga to resist the repeated charges of the British infantry; who went on in the front ranks of one of the columns that captured Stony Point, and who for almost five years endured the privations, hardships and severe destitution of the camp, and not a cent has been expended to erect a monument to his memory or pension him or his children.

ELISHA BASSETT.

“FRANCIS BERNARD, Esq., Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Province of Massachusetts Bay, in New England and Vice-Admiral of the same.

TO ELISHA BASSETT, GENT.,—GREETING.

By virtue of the power and authority in and by His Majesty's Royal Commission to me granted &c., over this, His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay aforesaid, I do by these presents (reposing special trust and confidence in your loyalty, courage and good conduct) constitute and appoint you, the said Elisha Bassett, to be Captain of the Second Military Company of foot of Yarmouth and in the Regiment of militia, in the County of Barnstable, whereof Silas Baum is Colonel.

You are therefore carefully and dilligently to discharge the duty of a Captain in leading, ordering and exercising said Company—in arms, both inferior officers and soldiers and keep them in good order and discipline, and they are hereby commanded to obey you as their Captain—and you are yourself to observe and follow orders and instructions, as you shall from time to time receive from your Colonel or other superior officers, according to military rules and discipline, pursuant to the trust reposed in you.

Given under my Hand and Seal at Arms, at Boston, the eleventh day of June,—in the fifth year of the Reign of His Majesty, King George the Third. Anno Domini, 1765.

By His
Excellency's Command,
JOHN COTTEN.
Secretary.

} Province of the
Massachusetts Bay
Barnstable.”

Eleven years after “in 1774, an assembly was ordered by Gov. Gage to convene Oct. 5th, but before that time arrived, he countermanded the writs of convocation by a proclamation. The assembly, however, to the number of ninety, met at Salem; the Governor not attending, they adjourned to Concord and afterwards to Cambridge; drew up a plan for the immediate defence of the Province, by enlisting men and appointing general officers.” One of these ninety men was Elisha Bassett, of Yarmouth. I have often heard his grand-daughter, my mother, speak of this patriotic act of his, as a manifestation

of great courage and decision of character. For his house stood on the north side of Cape Cod in what is now Dennis Close by the sea-shore. A war-ship might easily send men to arrest and hang him and destroy his house and family. Then the pecuniary sacrifice of going a representative was severely felt by them. My mother has repeatedly told how her grandmother, whose name was Ruhamah Jennings, before her marriage, was constantly saying, "we could always get a piece of silver out of the chest before grand-father went representative." Men now aspire to represent the people at the General Court, with a view of improving their finances, but he must go mostly, if not wholly at his own expense.

BARNABAS HOWES 1.

In a history of England we find the paragraph: "During these transactions the Americans began to make some exertions by sea, as well as by land; the system of non-importation, which had proceeded the war had caused a great scarcity of manufactured goods, which was severely felt, especially in procuring arms, ammunition and clothing for the troops. The Americans, however, by fitting out numerous privateers and other small vessels, found means to remedy in a considerable degree, by the multitude of their captures, this inconvenience, which had pressed so heavily on all classes of people, most of all on the army. The prizes made in a single year is said by some English writers, to have been estimated at a million sterling." Among the men who helped to do this highly important service for our nation, was Barnabas Howes 1, of Dennis, and though he never moved to Ashfield, his sons and daughters did; Kimball 1776, and his daughters Phoebe and Betsy soon after; and his and their descendants are numerous here and at the West. Dec. 25th, 1778, the privateer Arnold sailed from Boston harbor; a terribly severe storm soon commencing, the ship was driven against the rocks near Plymouth, and from the wreck the body of our hardy and strong ancestor, with those of seventy-seven others of sailors and soldiers, was taken; they having all been frozen to death by intense and almost unparalleled cold. The Jewish historian says David was a very fit man to be a king, for he went first of all into all danger. Of Barnabas Howes 1, it may be said, he was

a fit man to be a leader of one of the most dangerous expeditions in the Revolutionary war. For from what we can learn about him, he was an athletic and experienced seaman. From his youth his great strength and cool judgment gained him the reputation of being a sailor of the first class, and though not the captain of the privateer, I infer he was the best and strongest sailor on it. I also infer he had before this voyage been out on privateers. Two important historical thoughts may arise in the mind of the careful reader. One is that the starting out of the privateer, at that inclement season of the year, was owing to the anticipated approach of several transports with valuable stores for the British army. The other is that the sad death of seventy-eight men accomplished much towards discouraging the British government. For had the privateer captured a prize, that government would have known nothing about, what "exertions" could be made "on the sea" by "the Americans." But the news of the dreadful death of all these men, we must believe soon became known to the king's ministers, and they could not but understand how the Americans were exerting themselves "on the sea," and so became discouraged and weakened.

As we turn from this sketch, I wish to notice the exceedingly defective histories, which have been written in the United States of the Revolutionary war. I have never seen—though an extensive and careful reader of history—anything about "the exertions made on the sea." All our history books being written by men afraid to offend the Southern slave-holders; and who had therefore no interest in inquiring after what the common people of Massachusetts did.

ASHFIELD MOUNTAIN.

Few are aware how delightful and extensive a prospect is afforded by Peter's Hill, the highest point on Ashfield Mountain. We have seen it stated, that the beauties of a noted town in New Hampshire were not appreciated until they were carefully noticed by certain artists. We claim there are rare and valuable beauties lying comparatively unnoticed among the Green Mountains. We believe we are correct, when we say the prospect from Peter's Hill may be ranked first in fur-

nishing these. We should ascend the hill on the west side, for so the whole view breaks abruptly upon us, and a multitude of fine prospects crowd themselves on our eager attention. We feel the propriety of the name "Green Mountains." We are pleased with the beauty of the prospect, until its greatness delights us with the thought that we have before us, both the beautiful and sublime, and any one of a refined taste, will feel that a view where these are combined must have the preference. We have many beautiful prospects, but it is difficult to find one that is extensive and great, without being reminded of rugged rocks and a barren country; but Peter's Hill is not a barren mountain, for its top is a fine specimen of the excellent pasture, which the western part of our state affords, while on every side as far as the eye can reach, green pastures, green meadows and forests present themselves to our sight.

What adds to the interest of a visit to our mountain by the patriot and christian, is the historical story told by the name of the hill. Old Peter, who owned a lot of land on its top and side, was taken by slave-traders; some say as he was picking shells on the sea shore, other say he hid in the hut, when others were taken, but was betrayed by a dog, and at the age of six or eight years, brought to New England, and held a slave until the royal government ended. When our fathers obtained their liberty, they consistently gave him his. He became a land owner and lived to an old age, and died in peace in our free state. I have been told an aged woman, asked Dr. Bartlett, the son of his master, why he always called Old Peter "brother"? He replied, "he seems like a brother." Now is there not a moral beauty and greatness in his reply, which contrast with the conduct of many, who look upon the colored people as an inferior race? Then tradition informs us, our fathers in Massachusetts promised Heaven, if they were delivered from British armies, they would give liberty to their slaves; and when prosperity came and they were saved from their great danger, this hill is witness, they were true to their promise. Peter's Hill is therefore a monument to both the truthfulness and consistency of our fathers; a monument to the early emancipation of African slaves. Every inhabitant of Massachusetts, who is a friend of universal emancipation, and every one friendly to the freedom of the African race,

will feel an interest in visiting and contemplating a state, that was true in its prosperity to promises made in years of trial and distress.

Mr. Griswold in his history of Buckland, asserts that Miss Hannah White wrote the criticism upon Mary Lyon's methods of dress which we find in her Memoirs, but they were written by Mrs. Cowles, and it is so stated by President Hitchcock, who edited "the Memoir." He also asserts with great positiveness, that the Rev. William Ferry first courted Mary Lyon, and that a Mrs. White thought her daughter Amanda, would make him a better wife, and influenced him to marry her. It is a sufficient reply to say I have reliable information that Mr. Ferry was engaged to be married to Amanda White before he heard there was a Mary Lyon.

Jonathan Beals served in the Revolutionary war more than three years. For a part of the time he was employed in the manufacture of cannon. In 1794, he and Joseph Clarke and their families, with all lands lying north of a strait line, commencing at what is now the south-west corner of Ashfield, thence "west 17 degrees, south 195 rods," was annexed to the district of Plainfield.





HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF THE

TIMES AND MEN

OF

ASHFIELD, MASS.,

DURING THE

REVOLUTIONARY WAR,

BY

BARNABAS HOWES,

ASHFIELD.

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